



Performance Audit Division

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Medicaid Unwinding

Status of State Efforts to Prepare for the End of Continuous Coverage

Key Findings

The Departments of Human Services (DHS) and Community Health (DCH), as well as the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH), have developed strategies to facilitate a return to annual Medicaid renewals. Several risk areas can contribute to the improper loss of Medicaid coverage for enrollees, including administrative barriers, enrollees not being contacted, enrollee confusion, staffing deficiencies, and inadequate management information and oversight. Strategies to address these risks can generally be grouped into the categories below.

Communications

- DHS has used emails, text messages, robocalls, and its website to encourage enrollees to update contact information and select email or text communications as a preferred method of receiving official notices.
- DHS hired a public relations firm to help develop a communications plan that includes an unwinding web page, branding, informational videos, and paid media. Phase one focuses on updating contact information, while phase two will focus on educating enrollees of their responsibilities regarding renewals.

Policies

- DCH has obtained waivers from the federal government to facilitate more rapid renewals. These include greater flexibility to make renewal decisions based on third party data sources and information obtained for other benefit programs. DHS will also be able to send official notifications to enrollees based on addresses provided by care management organizations or the U.S. Postal Service.

Staffing

- DHS is attempting to hire approximately 500 additional eligibility caseworkers and creating a specialized Medicaid renewal team.
- Both DHS and OSAH will use temporary staff if needed. DHS will add call center staff, while OSAH will hire special administrative law judges if surges in hearings cannot be handled by current judges.

Technology/Automation

- DHS plans to use robotic processing automation (bots) to automate repetitive caseworker tasks, such as processing scanned or handwritten documents, pre-populating data from the customer portal, comparing information to third-party data interfaces, identifying red flags, and conducting certain administrative based renewals. Bots are also planned to populate some aspects of the OSAH fair hearing forms.
- OSAH has also already begun utilizing an electronic case management system and unified hearing calendar to better schedule and plan hearings and communicate with outside agencies and enrollees.
- DHS has already implemented a mobile-friendly site to allow enrollees to update contact information and upload document images directly through their mobile phone.

Background

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency (PHE), states have been required to suspend termination of coverage for individuals who are already enrolled or became enrolled in Medicaid. This “continuous coverage” will cease at the end of the PHE, beginning a 12-month period in which states must redetermine all enrollees’ Medicaid eligibility (this is known as the “unwinding”).

Why we did this review

When the PHE comes to an end, states must reinstitute Medicaid and PeachCare renewals that were suspended in March 2020. An increase in program enrollment and the length of time since renewals were last performed will make it difficult for states to accurately complete all renewals within the required timeframes.

This report provides an overview of Georgia’s preparation for the end of continuous coverage of the Medicaid and PeachCare benefits of approximately 2.6 million residents.